

BRUCE LEE

LEGACY LIVES ON!

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

*Shannon Lee Talks About New Projects Involving Her Famous Father and Reveals
Why She's Devoted Her Life to Preserving His Message*

INTERVIEW BY ROBERT W. YOUNG

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Your father's name has been in the news a lot recently. Probably the biggest story came in late March, when Brett Ratner, director of the Rush Hour movies, talked about a possible plan to remake Enter the Dragon.

Actually, we're not involved in that. Warner Bros. owns *Enter the Dragon*, and certainly they can remake it if they'd like to. I do think it would be silly to remake that movie because the thing that made it such a smash was Bruce Lee. If you take him out of it, you basically have a James Bondian plot with some person doing what I'm sure would be interesting and fun action sequences, but I don't know that it's possible to make that into a classic — not without Bruce Lee in it.

When *The Green Hornet* was made into a feature film in 2011 and Jay Chou was selected to portray Kato, fans found themselves comparing him with your father, and in the eyes of most, Chou was seen as "unworthy." It would seem that any actor or martial artist chosen to reprise Bruce Lee's character in *Enter the Dragon* would be fighting an impossible battle.

I think so, too. The thing I always say about my father is the reason he was so compelling to watch on-screen and his legacy exists so boldly and vibrantly today is because of *him*. He was such a self-cultivated, authentic, powerful presence, and he expressed that in his every move, every word and every deed. He really walked the

walk. That person you see in *Enter the Dragon* was that person in real life. I just don't think that can be replicated.

So you're saying that your father is an icon not just because of his martial arts movies. It's because of the man behind them, his philosophies, his knowledge of filmmaking and so on.

Definitely. He choreographed all the scenes in *Enter the Dragon*, and he added so much of the philosophical dialogue that was in the movie. All the memorable scenes — the finger pointing at the moon, the art of fighting without fighting — it all came from him. And then there's his own physicality and skill. I just don't know that it can be replicated ... or that anyone should try. (laughs)

What can you tell us about *Warrior* and Justin Lin, the man behind *Fast & Furious 6*, *Fast Five* and *Fast & Furious*?

We have a deal with Cinemax. We just closed our deal with Jonathan Tropper to write it and Justin Lin — he's my partner on the project — to direct the pilot. We're getting ready to work on the script with Jonathan. By the end of the year, we hope to start filming. I'm producing and consulting — helping put a "Bruce Lee touch" on all of it.

It must be exciting for you personally to be involved in a crime drama based on your father's notes.

So exciting! I have to credit Justin. I've met with him on several occasions,

and he's always genuine. Of course I'd had all my father's notes and writings on this particular project for years and years, but Justin provided the impetus to make us say, "Let's do it the way Bruce Lee would have wanted." He cares a lot about the project. The hope is that it will be this brilliant piece of entertainment, and we're doing our best to make that happen.

The next thing that's putting Bruce Lee in the news is the 75th anniversary of his birth, which is coming on November 27. What's in the works?

We've actually been celebrating my father's birthday all year, but there are also things coming up. On our social media outlets — Facebook, primarily, but also Twitter and Instagram — we're doing 75 special posts in honor of the 75th birthday. They consist of other people's remembrances, thoughts and quotes about my father. We'll be doing some video interviews with people who knew him, as well.

We're doing lots of specials and giveaways — for example, 75 limited-edition items that are available through our store. We're doing giveaways of Bruce and Brandon prints because it's also my brother's 50th birthday celebration. We recently started Brandon's official Facebook page.

On October 24, the Bruce Lee Foundation will hold the Bruce Lee Festival in Las Vegas. It's going to be a big celebration downtown with screenings, speakers, music and other events. We'll have more information in a month or so.

That festival will kick off an online auction that flows into November, which is my father's birth month. In November, we're also doing an exhibit and fundraiser in Hong Kong. That's all for the 75th. There are other things happening, too.

What's happening with the Bruce Lee exhibit at the museum in Seattle?

Over the past few years, the foundation has worked with different museums to create exhibits. For example, we have an exhibit at the Hong Kong Heritage Museum that will be up for five years. And we have an exhibit in Seattle at the Wing Luke Museum, which will be up for another three years.



Photo Courtesy of Wing Luke Museum

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brucelee.com

[Bruce Lee exhibit at Wing Luke Museum](#)

wingluke.org/brucelee



We're in communication with a group in Seattle to work out all the details for our own space. In the next eight to nine months, we'll be doing the design and feasibility work, and then I hope we'll be able to present something shortly thereafter. We're also creating an online presence for the museum so people can get access to some of the collections, virtually if not physically quite yet.

Regarding the museum in Hong Kong: Do you think China is becoming more interested in Bruce

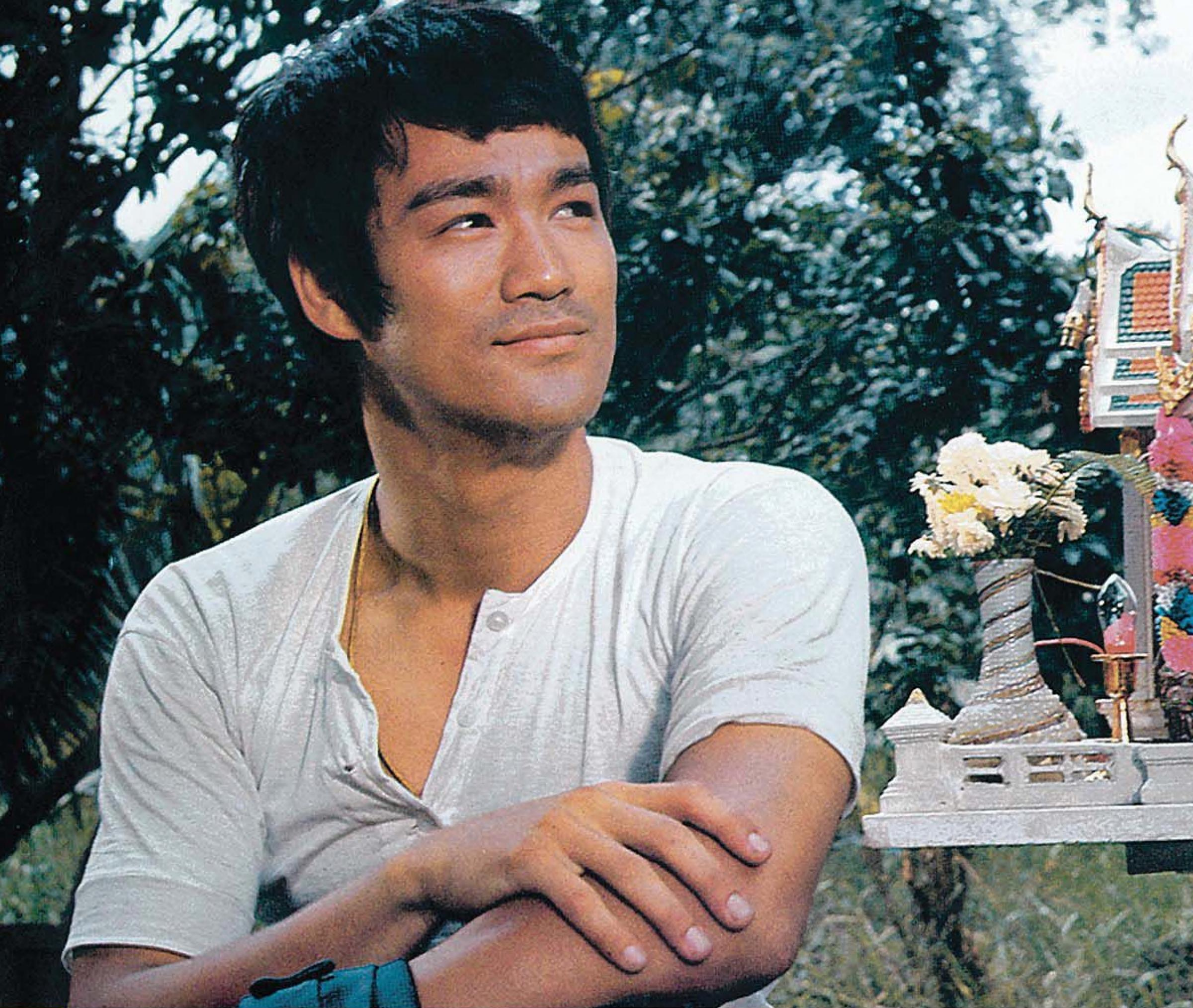
Lee and his legacy, or has it always been that way?

I think in Hong Kong, it has always been that way. When it comes to Greater China, it seems that now people want to do more with the Bruce Lee name. It's an interesting dynamic because my father's name is very well-known in China, but a lot of the younger generation doesn't know much about him. They haven't seen the films, and they don't know the depths of his legacy, the inspiration of his message or the way he lived his life. I'm trying to find a way to educate them. A

lot of people just want to use the name to create products or businesses, but we feel there has to be more to it than that. We try to make sure people understand what the message is.

Tommy Gong, author of Bruce Lee: The Evolution of a Martial Artist, recently dropped by our office and mentioned the same thing — that you're working hard to spread knowledge of your father's philosophies.

This is why I'm involved in the business, honestly. If my father had



made a handful of kick-ass movies in the '70s and there was an opportunity to exploit that by putting photos on T-shirts to make money — I wouldn't be interested in putting all my energy into that.

The thing I want to put my energy toward is the philosophy. So much value comes from being around that and trying to live my life in a better way, the self-actualization and self-cultivation, who I am and what walking my own path means. It's inspirational, especially the way my father overcame obstacles and worked so hard and believed in himself.

It's a message worth putting out there. It resonates with so many people from different walks of life. You don't have to be a martial artist

to get value from it. The message is universal: using no way as way, having no limitation as limitation. Keeping that alive, inspiring people and putting out something positive in the world is what really appeals to me.

Do you think the philosophies your father is known for grew out of his martial arts practice, or were they conceived by him to be bigger than the martial arts?

That's a good question. I would say the philosophies grew out of his martial arts practice. He started when he was 13, which is quite young. He really tried to embody what he learned from Yip Man. My father would write about suddenly understanding something such as what it means to be like water.

I think he had a receptive mind from the beginning and was always very curious. He liked to push the envelope and test things. When the martial arts and the philosophies started making their way into his universe, he was the perfect vessel for it. He turned it into a personal quest and started reading Eastern and Western philosophy books and using himself as a life experiment.

What's the best resource for people who are interested in Bruce Lee's philosophies?

Obviously, *Tao of Jeet Kune Do* is a great resource. It's not just a martial arts book. I know people who are not martial artists who tell me how much they've gotten out of it because



MUST-HAVE BRUCE LEE BOOKS AND DVDS

Tao of Jeet Kune Do: Expanded Edition

paper and e-book

Bruce Lee's Fighting Method: The Complete Edition

paper and e-book

Bruce Lee: The Evolution of a Martial Artist

paper and e-book

Bruce Lee's Fighting Method: Basic Training

DVD

Bruce Lee: Wisdom for the Way

paper and e-book

Bruce Lee: The Incomparable Fighter

paper book

Chinese Gung Fu - Revised and Updated

paper and e-book

I think he'd be one hell of a 75-year-old! (laughs) We'd probably have YouTube videos of him doing impressive things at 75. He was a person who was extremely passionate about life, so I think he'd be engaged in a lot of things while still giving himself opportunities to express himself on any subject, whether it was filmmaking, being a fight fan or teaching.

But because his journey was one of introspection and ultimately expression of that, I believe that he would have continued to be a teacher. He had a real desire to help people and to find others who were interested in going on a journey and go through the process with them. He wanted people to search inside themselves for their own path. Maybe not just in martial arts, maybe in the field of personal cultivation, but I know he would have been a teacher.

With all this talk about your father's focus on philosophy, do you think that people who regard him only as a martial arts technician are looking at the finger and missing the moon?

(laughs) I guess it depends on why they're looking. If you're working on your punching and you're looking at his techniques, there's obviously good information in that. But he was concerned about the physical, the mental *and* the spiritual aspects of things. So if people are only looking at the physical, they're missing a lot of really good things. But they're on their own journey ...

... And they might come around to look at the bigger picture later?

That's right. However you find Bruce Lee — whether it's through martial arts, through movies or through a cool T-shirt — once he's in your consciousness, you can't help but go to the next place. ✕

it's balanced between technique and philosophy. And it's his thoughts from cover to cover.

That little book *Bruce Lee: Wisdom for the Way* is a wonderful primer, if you will, because it's so easy to take in with just a quote and an image per page. You can flip to a page and pick up a pearl of wisdom for the day. It's a nice entry path into his philosophy.

Of course there are other books with quotes, but I always think of these two as great gateway books.

On the occasion of the 75th celebration of his birthday, what do you think your father would be doing now? Would he be a writer, a philosopher, a moviemaker, a martial arts instructor, an MMA fan?



"THIS SUMMER, WE'LL BE INTRODUCING A TEA PRODUCT. MY FATHER USED TO DRINK A LOT OF TEA. HE WOULD PUT SUPPLEMENTS IN HIS TEA AND DRINK IT THROUGHOUT THE DAY. SO WE CREATED A TEA THAT HAS HIS SUPPLEMENT FORMULA IN IT. WE WILL BE ROLLING IT OUT IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA THIS SUMMER." — Shannon Lee